Archaic Font Sampler

Peter Wilson
peter.r.wilson@boeing.com

5 July 1999

Contents

1 Introduction **1**

2 Phoenician **2**

3 Greek **2**

4 Etruscan **2**

5 Runic **3**

6 Linear B **3**

7 Cypriot **3**

1 Introduction

This document provides some samples of the archaic fonts. They are available from CTAN in the `fonts/archaic` directory. The fonts form a set that display how the Latin alphabet and script evolved from the initial Phoenician letters until Roman times.

The fonts consist of letters only — punctuation had not been invented during this period, neither, effectively, had numerals. The fonts are all single-cased. Upper- and lower-case letters were again only invented after the end of this period.

Other fonts are also available for some scripts that were not on the alphabetic tree.

2 Phoenician

The Phoenician alphabet and script dates from about 1000 BC. The Phoenecians wrote right to left. The script is provided in both a left to right and a right to left form. The alphabet consisted of 22 letters. The font provided actually includes a 23rd letter as the *vau* character had two forms: 𐤅 and 𐤆.

The font and package are in the `phoenician` subdirectory.

𐤀𐤁𐤂𐤃𐤄𐤅𐤆𐤇𐤈𐤉𐤊𐤋𐤌𐤍𐤎𐤏𐤐𐤑𐤒𐤓𐤔𐤕
𐤕𐤔𐤓𐤒𐤑𐤐𐤏𐤎𐤍𐤌𐤋𐤊𐤉𐤈𐤇𐤆𐤅𐤄𐤃𐤂𐤁𐤀

3 Greek

The Greeks used the Phoenician script and alphabet as a basis for their own writing. In the earliest times the Greeks used to alternate the writing direction for successive lines, but later settled down to writing left to right. Two forms of the Greek script are provided.

The earlier one is representative of about the sixth century BC, when the Greek alphabet consisted of 26 letters. The font and package are in the `greek6cbc` subdirectory.

ΑΒΓΔΕϜΙΗΘΚΛΜΝΞΟΠϘΡΣΤΥΧΦΨΩ

The later script is representative of the fourth century BC, when the alphabet had been reduced to the 24 letters in use today. The font and package are in the `greek4cbc` subdirectory.

ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗΘΙΚΛΜΝΞΟΠΡΣΤΥΧΦΨΩ

4 Etruscan

The Etruscans, who were the precursors of the Romans in Italy, based their alphabet and script on the Phoenicain and Greek models. Like the Phoenicians, they wrote right to left. In their turn, the Romans based their alphabet on the Etruscan one, but they wrote right to left and provided the forms of our capital letters.

The script is provided in both a left to right and a right to left form and is representative of about the eighth century BC. The font and package are in the `etruscan` subdirectory.

ΑΒΓΔΕϜΙΗΘΚΛΜΝΟΠϘΡΣΤΥΧΦΨΘ
ΘΨΦΧΥΤΣΡΠϘΟΝΜΛΚΙΗΘΕϜΔΓΒΑ

5 Runic

The *futharc* alphabet (named, like ours, after the first few letters) was a script used in Northern Europe until after the Middle Ages, when it died out after printing was invented. It has glyphs that are reminiscent of some of those in the other scripts shown here, but some are wildly different. I have included it because it has the *wen* character, ᚹ, which is the first appearance of a character for the 'W' sound. Also, it has the *ger* character, ᛄ, which corresponds to the modern 'J' sound — 'J' did not appear in the Latin alphabet until about the mid 1500's.

The Anglo-Saxon version of the font and package are in the `runic` subdirectory.

ᚠᚢᚦᚩᚱᚳᚷᚹᚻᚾᛁᛄᛇᛈᛉᛋᛏᛒᛖᛗᛚᛝᛟᛞ

6 Linear B

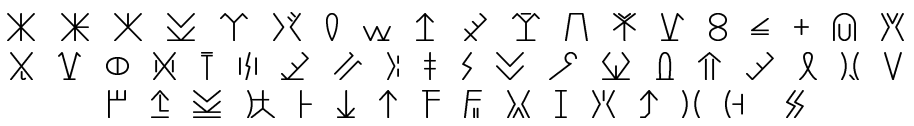
The *Linear B* script was a syllabary that was used during the approximate period between 1600 and 1200 BC for writing the Mycenaean Greek dialect. Most examples of the script come from Crete, and in particular from Knossos. The script was deciphered in 1953 by Michael Ventris with assistance from John Chadwick.

The script consists of some 60 basic signs, 16 optional signs, and about 11 signs that have yet to be deciphered. The script also had signs for numbers (1–1000), and signs for various kinds of weights and measures. There were also sets of signs for different kinds of trade goods, such as pots or wool. Although Linear B was used for writing Greek, there is no other relationship between this ancient script and the Greek alphabet.

The Metafont script includes only the basic, optional, unidentified, and number signs. The font and package are in the `linearb` subdirectory. The basic signs are illustrated below.

7 Cypriot

The *Cypriot* script was a syllabary used in Cyprus during the approximate period between 1000 and 200 BC for writing Greek. It has a relationship to Linear B as it includes some of the same signs. Towards the end of its life few people could read the script, so inscriptions were written using both the syllabary and the Greek alphabetic characters. These bilinguals made it relatively easy to decipher the script, a task that was essentially completed by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Like Linear B, the Cypriot script has no relationship with the Greek alphabet apart from the fact that both can be used for writing the same language.

The script consisted of 55 signs. The Metafont source and package is in the `cypriot` subdirectory.